Sixty percent of the worlds hungry are women. This striking fact was found in Girls Not Brides in *Traditions Can Change- Ending Child Marriage.* In most countries around the world women and young girls are being neglected just because they are thought to be the inferior sex. One harsh statistic was found in *World Hunger* written by Claire Stanford. It read that more than eight hundred million people go to bed hungry each night, and more than eleven thousand children die because of it each day (69).

An old Hawaiian parable gives you a good insight on just how and why you should help. Naka Nathaniel told the tale in the book *Half the Sky* (45)*.*

A man goes out on the beach and sees that it is covered with starfish that have washed up in the tide. A little boy is waking along, picking them up and throwing them back into the water.

“What are you doing, son?” the man asks. “You see how many starfish there are? You’ll never make a difference.”

The boy paused thoughtfully, and picked up another starfish and threw it into the ocean.

“It sure made a difference to that one,” he said.

That passage is very inspiring and makes one realize that you can make a difference by just one little factor. Naka Nathaniel encourages his readers to do that little something extra to change how things are perceived. He believes individuals of higher privilege have a moral responsibility to help underprivileged people in third world countries.

*In Africa, ‘Poverty Has a Female Face’* statesthat seven hundred thousand infants are likely to die before their first birthday. *Half the Sky* also expresses that, “Statics just can’t capture what it feels like to have a hollow pit in the stomach, to lose weight or get sick because of malnutrition” (167). *Half the Sky* really pushes the fact that there is a huge problem in this world and its inhabitants need to fix it. The book makes it clear that without aid from other nations, some of these struggling counties have a great potential to be seriously wounded.

The book *Africa* claims that merely one out of every four Africans has access to clean water, (Egendorf 22)*.* Just twenty-five percent of the civilians are using clean water each day. *Africa* explains that too often people take for granted just being able to go to the faucet and use as much water as they desire. To people in poverty stricken countries, things like that are just unheard of.

*Africa,* written by Lauren K. Engendorf, gave another fact to illistrate how poor these people actually are. She wrote that “Seventy out of every one hundred Africans are either destitute or on the verge of poverty” (22). Engendorf really stresses the point that it is not acceptable to have seventy percent of an entire continent be either in or on the verge of poverty. Another startling fact found in *Half the Sky* was that “Forty percent of the worlds population lives on less than two dollars a day,” (Kristoff 21)*.* Two dollars is not even enough to go into a convenience store and buy a bottle of pop and a candy bar. The two books clarify how much distress some of these civilians are actually in.

*Stop the Hunger* declaresthat seventy-three thousand tons of goods are wasted in the United States in just one day, while only fifteen thousand tons of global food aid are provided in a day. In addition, sixty-six million dollars are spent on food purchased and then tossed by American households today. Stunningly, it would only take twenty million dollars to feed all of the hungry worldwide. These facts explain that the United States citizens take too much for granted. Most people will throw away half their meal because they dislike what is being served or they are full without even thinking twice about it. An African citizen would have a hard time even considering doing anything along those lines.

In the World Bank Groups website, *Africa, ‘Poverty Has a Female Face’* it is indicated that women are hit the hardest on the poverty scale*.* It says that, “It is women, not men, across Africa who are bleeding jobs because of the crisis.” Furthermore it quoted Ezekwesill saying, “Poverty has a female face and the global economic downturn will have a significant impact on women as more of them lose jobs and are forced to manage shrinking household incomes.” African females are losing their highly cherished jobs strictly because of their sex. When a business has to make a cut, women are certainly the first to be laid off. At the same time a man with the same business stature would not lose his job. This is mainly because males are thought to be the superior sex in Africa.

*World Hunger* explains that idea very well*.* It reads, “Virtually all nutritional deficiencies can be easily and cheaply prevented, sometimes for pennies per child” (107). Just think how much you could help for just some pocket change. In the book *Africa* it states that “Almost forty years after independence, almost all African countries not only import a substantial amount of food; many of them depend on food donations from other countries for sheer survival” (21). Without help from people who are in the right position to give assistance, these countries would cease to exist. Just some pocket change donated to these struggling countries could make an enormous alteration in this world.

Another massive challenge African women face is sex slavery. The novel *Half the Sky* really clarifies this issue. So many girls are being forced into sex slavery in third world countries. This type of slavery mostly takes place in a site called a brothel. A brothel is a place where men come and pay for sex, usually the girls are brainwashed into believing that they want to be there or they are there involuntary. In addition to these girls and women being brainwashed, the brothel owners often get them addicted to drugs so they become dependent on their so called “pimps” and are forced to stay by their own addiction.

When the author of *Half the Sky* asked a few women about the issue most of them replied, “Don’t do anything for us, do something for our children” (58). That genuinely demonstrates how unselfish these women are. The book also gives a glimpse of what the women really feel like by showing a couple of pictures. In the handful of pictures the pain in the women’s’ eyes is just evident. It gives a good insight on how these females are actually feeling.

It is not the laws that need to be changed; it is the way of thinking. There are several laws about this subject, but very few of them are followed. In the same book, *Half the Sky,* Dr. Syed was quoted as saying, “When I treat rape victims, I tell the girls not to go to the police, because if a girl goes to the police, the police will rape her” (84). Dr Syed explains that if the police will not help these girls, who will?

Shockingly, *Half the Sky* describes that every year at least another two million (after the one-hundred and seven million already missing) females worldwide disappear because of gender discrimination (intro: XV). Many of these girls are promised they will have a great job in the city and are trafficked from there. If they are lucky enough to escape they are often shunned away by their hometown residents. The village people view them as dirty and unlucky to be around. The rejected girl is commonly expected to leave the area permanently or take her own life.

*Half the Sky* acknowledged that “Some degree of prostitution will probably always be with us, but we need not acquiesce to widespread sexual slavery” (34). They explain that prostitution is the oldest practice out there, so it is very unlikely to stop completely. But what is not out of reach is stopping the sex-trafficking market from thriving. Changing the awful so called “traditions” that have been practiced for years can do this.

The book also stated “Capitalism created new markets for rice and potatoes, but also for female flesh” (11). In some countries the train of thought is just different. The people believe in things that are not even feasible. *Half the Sky* explains by saying, “In both Asia and Africa, there is a legend that AIDS can be cured by having sex with a virgin, and that has nurtured demand for you girls kidnapped from their villages” (12). They say that thoughts like that need to be changed, and changed fast. If the citizens were educated on things like that, the problem would be reduced drastically. It is not that the people are unintelligent; it is that they are uneducated and naïve toward such subject matter.

A person’s virginity is a sacred thing in African counties. There is sort of a double standard there. While it is encouraged for young men to do what nature intended them to do, young women are sometimes killed for having sex out of wedlock. But whom are these men supposed to have sex with? This is where the prostitution comes in. A young virgin is worth much more than a girl who has been so called “used” by other men. Usually, the poor peasant girls are the ones who are affected the most. They are ordinarily uneducated and thought to be worthless, so they are the ones kidnapped and forced to work in brothels. Many of them never see their homes, families, or friends ever again.

The side effects from being treated like this are both harmful physically and mentally. Mentally these females are beat down until they feel they have no meaning in life. Physically women often develop fistulas. A fistula is when the vaginal wall is torn or broken. This is either caused from repetitive raping or problems during childbirth. Frequently, fistulas are caused by delivery problems that could easily have been prevented.

Many times women are forced to have their children at home with no midwife or doctor because they have no money to pay for the services. If they are lucky enough to have medical care the help is typically unqualified to deal with labor problems. *Health Care in Sub-Saharan Africa* written by Forrest Cole gives detail that “There is just eight-hundred thousand medical staff in the whole of Africa” (101). It also states, “In Malawi, a country of twelve-million people, there are just one-hundred doctors and two-thousand nurses” (101). The book explains that these people are in desperate need of medical help but have nowhere to turn to find what they are looking for.

Having this issue can be life changing. When a woman has a fistula all her bowels and everything from her urinary tract leak continually. This is not only embarrassing to the women but they are turned away from society because of their unpleasant odor. Ruth Kennedy explains in *Half the Sky* “The fistula patient is the modern-day leper” (97). She makes it clear that a fistula patient cannot help that she has been ill treated and does not deserve to have his terrible injury.

In contrast, not all stories end as horror stories. In *Half the Sky* they tell a story of a woman named Mukhtar Mai (71). Her brother Shakur was kidnapped and gang raped by a group of men. To cover up their doings they blamed young Shakur for raping a girl younger than him. His older sister Mukhtar tried to apologize and smooth things over for her family. That plan went completely wrong. To punish their family Mukhtar was sentenced to being gang raped by four men.

She later wrote, “They didn’t even need to use their weapons. Rape kills her (70).” When she got home that night, after staggering home naked in front of a jeering crowd, she planned to kill herself. It is a custom that women commit suicide after going through such a thing to spare any more embarrassment to her family.

Astonishingly, Mukhtar’s parents would not let her do so and encouraged her to go to the police. She finally listened, and after much time she received an eight thousand three hundred dollar reward. Most people expected her spend the money on herself, but she refused to. Astoundingly, she invested every penny into building schools to educate girls just like her. Eventually, she raised four hundred and thirty thousand dollars from donations and had built several new schools. Soon enough Mukhtar became an international celebrity. She appeared on many news stations throughout the world. That being said, she did not let the fame go to her head. She undoubtedly stayed true to her roots.

Mukhtar could have moved to the city and become very successful. Instead she chose to stay in her home village and keep on building the education system. During that time she sat down next to little girls and learned the basics of education herself. “Mukhtar changed the paradigm, and women and girls began to go to the police” (Kristoff 71). What joy Mukhtar must have gotten from the success she has had throughout her lifetime.

Obviously there is a huge problem in Africa today. There is a massive epidemic of hunger all over the world, but the problem really subsides in Africa. When seventy percent of a continents’ population is on the verge of poverty there is a definite problem. The sting of hunger must just be a mind numbing pain. Nobody deserves to have to live like that and there is a definite need for help.

Sex slavery is a vast and wide spreading problem. The girls that this affects are more than likely poor, uneducated, and unskilled. This problem develops into many other problems and is thought to be unfixable. It is a massive challenge and needs to be stopped. People of higher privileges have a moral responsibility to help underprivileged people in third world countries.

It is the women and children who are severely suffering. Seven hundred thousand infants are likely to die before their first birthday, and sixty percent of the worlds hungry are women. Just like the Hawaiian parable told earlier about the old man and starfish written by Naka Nathaniel, there is always room for help. Every ounce of aid could make that little bit of difference.

After gaining knowledge of all the problems Africa faces, I really wanted to help. I searched the Internet for charities that I could participate in. I found a wonderful site called *Dress a Girl Around the World.* This organization puts together dresses for young girls and women all around the world, but mainly in Africa. They encourage you to craft together dresses from pillowcases and t-shirts. I loved the idea of making outfits for needy girls out of everyday things that can be found lying around the house. There is greater feeling than giving to someone who really needs it.

I began to further explore the website. I came across the most touching pictures and videos of the African youth wearing the dresses. I watched a video of some girls singing and dancing in the dresses they received. I viewed that video over and over because I fell in love with the big grins the little ones had on their faces. It really just warmed my heart. The smiles the girls had on could say a thousand words. It motivated me to want to donate my time to girls like them.

My aunts, mother, grandma and I all got together and began sewing the dresses for girls who truly need them. There is a wonderful feeling you get when helping someone in need. Although we are not finished with the dresses, we plan to have enough to cloth a family or two. My family and I feel we are so blessed to have all the things that we do. Because of our good fortune we felt the least we could do was give a little girl a chance to feel pretty.

I sincerely feel like I am accomplishing something by doing this. I also feel like I am learning an incredible lesson. Before I started this project I took so many things for granted. After learning what some people in the world are living like I think twice about things I say and do. I make sure to thank God each day for everything and everybody that he has blessed me with in my lifetime.

Not only do you have to donate time like I am doing, but you can also contribute money. Many people do not give a cash donation because they are worried that the money will not go where they intend it. If you do a little research on some good foundations you are more likely to get the money where you want it to go. Every little dime or penny can make an immense difference in somebody’s life.

Something that will give you sense of fulfillment is helping someone else in need. I am donating my time to the *Dress a Girl Around the World* foundation. Like I stated earlier, it is a wonderful feeling to give to someone who truly needs it. I found that donating your time or even money can give you a fantastic feeling inside.